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Both Dulleses Didn't Know

While the Central Intelligence Agency is smarting under proof that it had little or no idea about what was going on in Europe before the Egyptian invasion, it is reported in Washington that the Eisenhower administration is going to fire a bunch of ambassadors because they were also caught napping.

Never had there been such a dearth of inside information when it was needed most.

In the diplomatic shuffle, it is being predicted, American envoys to the four most important European countries—Britain, France, Italy and West Germany—are going to walk the plank. Some of them had been found wanting even before the Suez crisis.

Mr. John Foster Dulles is said to be particularly upset that Ambassadors Winthrop Aldrich in London and Douglas Dillon in Paris were unable to break through what is regarded as a deliberate blackout of news by British and French foreign offices in the week before the invasion of Egypt. Both of these men are definitely resigning their present posts, and so is Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce who has returned from Italy for one of her frequent visits to New York. Ambassador James Conant, former president of Harvard University, is believed to be eager to leave his post in West Germany.

These are going to be the goats, and it is presumed that they will pass out of the picture without reminding that they were not necessarily insulated from diplomatic developments through any fault of their own. Instead, they were laboring under the handicap of working for a secretary of state in Washington whom Western European leaders simply did not trust. To confide in the ambassadors meant bringing Mr. Dulles into the picture again when he was looked upon as an irresponsible and unreliable one-man wrecking crew.

Most of the fat cats who are to be dumped were chosen for their wealth and position, rather than because of diplomatic talents. And it might be thought that, in making a change, the career boys would have their chance. But once again the White House is pictured as seeking "top flight business men" in the critical weeks ahead. The jobs will continue to be regarded as political plums to be awarded to deserving party members (and heavy campaign contributors) who are wealthy enough to stand the expense.

This is the way Secretary Dulles' weighty problem is to be handled, but if there are any plans to shake up brother Allen Dulles' C.I.A., they have not been revealed. Yet the highly secret intelligence agency was equally in the dark when the Egyptian invasion took place, and it is definitely in need of a shake-up.

Last spring 59 senators voted against setting up a watchdog committee to check the effectiveness of this agency, and now they have every reason to regret it. They can be troubled by the thought if the C.I.A. could not find out what our allies were doing there is little reason to believe it knows much about developments in Russia.

For a long time official Washington was obsessed with the thought that the Soviet slogan of "peaceful coexistence" might be taken seriously. And as late as the Sunday before the uprising in Hungary and the Bolshevik massacre, Secretary Dulles told a television audience he didn't expect a "blood bath" in Eastern Europe.

Adding it all up, the logical conclusion is that there is no percentage in depending on the Dulles brothers and that the country will feel safer when their reign is terminated. At the best, Mr. Eisenhower had a difficult task before him. And when those who brief him on developments are habitually groping in the dark, he is placed in an almost impossible situation.

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